# patient is the night

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# patient is the night

by MackSelf

Summary

A hoard of angry men, like a stampede of animals, burst from the forest. All holding guns and knives and shovels, each with a red face full of fury. All chasing that skinny, cackling boy. All of them that were running towards Techno, too.

He didn't think that they would stop to listen as he explained, and so he found himself running alongside that brown haired boy.

"What did you do??" He shouted over the angry screams and yells.

The boy turned to look at him and Techno was suddenly struck by how bright his eyes were. Not literally, they were a deep brown. But something in them just shined. Techno never noticed how dull everyone else's eyes had become.

"I stole this," the boy laughed, and pulled a tiny piglet from his jacket. The poor thing stared around with wide eyes as it was jostled about.

"You stole a pig?!" Techno gasped, diving behind a car to avoid gunshots.

or

Techno was alone when the world ended. He somehow gains a brother and a pet pig out of it.

Notes

See the end of the work for <u>notes</u>

Techno thinks that he and Wilbur might've been friends, before all this.

Before is a rather subjective word. Before was picket fences and flower gardens. 9 to 5's and grocery shopping. Doing dishes and sleeping in.

He wished that he had met Wilbur then. Before the world got so harsh. Before *they* got so harsh.

People always viewed Techno as intimidating, with his tall stature and monotone voice. He hated it back then.

It was useful now, though.

He was luckier than most, when Before became Now. He didn't have a family, didn't have friends. The most he had was his crumbling house and his small garden. He hated it back then.

He misses it now.

Most people don't bother him. He keeps to himself and stays alone. That's usually dangerous in the world they are now, but he has made himself valuable. Desperate people pay a lot for food, and Techno is one of the few brave enough to venture out to find it. Towns and camps and groups often fall to his feet begging him to stay, begging him to keep helping, but he keeps moving.

*What are you looking for?* An old woman once asked him.

*I'm not looking for anything.* Techno had replied.

He remembers the look she gave him.

*Just a nomad, then?*

*Just a nomad.*

Then, as usual, Wilbur had to ruin things.

A scrappy boy, around the same age as him, bumped past him. Where the years of struggle and strife helped build Techno's strength, it seemed to have done the opposite to Wilbur. Thin bones and pointy elbows, all covered by tattered clothing. He looked just like the starving people he helped, maybe even worse.

But Wilbur had something that nobody else had.

His grin was wild, almost manically so, his hair as untamed to match. His laugh was high pitched and airy, shaking his thin chest with dramatic gasps. Techno almost shot him down right then and there. That was, until he saw the others.

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"What's a good name for it?" The boy asked, diving beside him.

Techno started to crawl to the other side. "I don't know. Why would you even steal it? It's tiny."

The boy gasped in offense and shoved the baby pig in his face. "It's cute! Come on, what's a good name? Oh, I know! What's *your* name?"

"Techno." They barely flinched as gunshots pierced the car tires.

"See, that's a perfect name," The boy nuzzled his face against the piglet's snout, ignoring its frantic attempts to get away. "Hello, little Techno."

"Wh- you can't give it my name!" Techno sputtered, leaning forward to grab a rock from the ground.

"Why not?"

"Because it's *my name.* "

Techno threw the stone as hard as he could, grinning as it shattered a building's window. The angry mob turned towards it, gunshots already bouncing off of the molding shop sign.

"Well, what else am I supposed to call him?" Wilbur huffed, already taking off towards the woods while the people were distracted.

"Literally anything else."

"Okay. Hello, anything else!! What a handsome pig you are!!"

"Ugh, not that. What's *your* name?"

"Wilbur."

"See! That's the perfect pig name. Just like the one in the children's book."

"But that's *my* name! I can't name him that!!"

Looking back, Techno was surprised that the mob hadn't heard them bickering. Unfortunately, the pain in his side remained consistent since that day, because Wilbur never seemed to leave.

Not that Techno *made* him go. He could very easily force him to hit the road if he tried. He could just sling Wilbur over his shoulder, walk to the nearest camp, dump him there, and run away while he tried to steal more baby pigs. He had put a lot of thought into it.

But the company was nice. And so Wilbur and Charlotte, (they had come to an agreement on the pig's name), were there to stay.

Techno huffed and groaned and complained, while Wilbur teased and laughed and annoyed, while Charlotte oinked and chuffed and squealed. Birds would squawk and fly away at the sight of them. The few remaining deer always ran away when Wilbur tripped on something or Charlotte stepped on something or when Techno snapped at them both.

Things were harder, now that they were here.

He still didn't make them leave.

Despite the struggle to get enough food for them all, it was so nice to be able to talk with someone. Truly talk with someone. Not exchange pleasantries while passing each other on the road. Not thinly veiled threats when someone started looking at his bag a bit too closely.

Laughing. Joking. Nudging each other. Slapping each other's arms. Falling asleep on shoulders while the other took watch.

Somewhere, somehow, Wilbur had gone from an annoyance to a brother.

Techno could read him better than anyone. All it took was a twitch of his finger for Techno to get on the same page. All it took was a quirk of a lip or a slight dip in his eyebrow. Back then, Wilbur had seemed like a carefree, if not very foolish, man who had little regard for his own safety.

That wasn't necessarily *wrong,* but as Techno slowly got well versed in the art of calming Wilbur's racing heart or stilling his shaking hands, he realized maybe the word carefree wasn't quite right.

"What are you looking for?" Techno asked one day, having spent the early hours of the day holding Wilbur's hands as he shook and gasped.

Wilbur looked up at him from under his messy bangs, dark circles prominent under his eyes, and grinned. "Who says I'm looking for anything?"

"Everyone is looking for something."

"Even you?"

Techno looked away.

He thought that Wilbur would pull away from him then, gently let go of his hands and go back to sleep- content to leave that conversation to the wind. But Wilbur always found a way to surprise Techno.

"I had everything I wanted, before all this. I don't think anything I would find would really compare," Wilbur whispered. His eyes were locked to the floor. Just before Wilbur could pull away, flash a fragile smile and joke before turning his back, Techno found himself speaking.

"Before this, I had a house."

Wilbur paused. "Yeah?"

"Yeah."

He expected Wilbur to tease, like he always did. It was a rather silly thing to miss, in hindsight. Most people lost families and friends. He just lost his tiny, little house with the tiny, little garden in the backyard.

But, like always, Wilbur surprised him.

"That sounds nice. Really nice," he smiled and squeezed his hand. He didn't turn away or go back to sleep, instead he just scooted closer. And together they sat in silence, shoulders pressed together.

Techno didn't know why he was so shocked that Wilbur learned to read him as well as Techno had learned to read Wilbur.

Of course, everything changed. They always did.

They encountered less people on the road. Even less animals. They started foraging for food instead, and Techno was proud to share his plant expertise. Charlotte had become their little food detector. They had found a leash for her in an abandoned shop one day and she had been dragging Wilbur around ever since. Techno refuses to hold the leash, but he does sneak her some extra food whenever she leads them to edible fruits and berries.

Techno hadn't known it at the time, but that pig saved their lives.

They hadn't been paying much attention, much too busy exchanging quips and stories and content to let Charlotte lead the pack. Wilbur threw his head back in laughter at the very same time she squealed. She was a few feet ahead, sniffing the ground and shaking her head.

And just like that, she turned and ran, pulling with enough force to drag Wilbur to the ground. It took ages to calm her down, but she still refused to go any further. With a shrug, Wilbur and Techno decided to go back.

He hadn't noticed it at the time, but the tree only a few steps ahead of them was dying.

The forest was eerily quiet as they walked back. Wilbur stood closer than usual, eyes constantly scanning the trees around them. They didn't stop to sleep, instead making a straight beeline towards the closest town.

And it was there, they saw a man covered in rust.

He coughed up blood and bile. His hands cracked and splintered, turning a sickly red. It was like a car rusting before their very eyes.

Eventually, a woman took pity on him. Wilbur flinched at the gunshot.

Nobody knew what happened, only that the man went out to hunt and came back sickly. Slowly, more and more people stumbled into town, each person more rusted than the last. Nobody knew what it was or how it spread. It wasn't contagious, they had hoped, or else the rest of the town would've been infected as well.

Wilbur and Techno decided to haul ass, having seen enough zombie movies to know how this ends. In the dark of the night, they grabbed two horses and ran. They weaved through the trees, turning away without question every time Charlotte squealed.

The deeper in they got, the more the plants seemed to melt. Trees caved in on themselves, plants crumbled into ash, grass turned a sickly brown. The smell of rotting bark and decomposing leaves left them gagging.

*Radiation,* Wilbur had whispered, voice sounding choked. *Remember the news? This is radiation.*

*Then those people back at the town…?* Techno couldn't finish his sentence.

The two of them got off of their horses. Slowly, their makeshift party of five traveled through the deadly forest, led by their tiny pig. Each step felt like their last. Techno didn't protest when Wilbur grabbed onto the sleeve of his jacket.

They didn't sleep for 2 days. The horses were restless and starving. Techno had suggested that they leave him, but Wilbur couldn't stand the thought of leaving them alone to be rusted, not when they were the ones to lead them into the forest in the first place. Their legs ached and Techno's headache surged in time with his frantic heart. Wilbur swayed on his feet, looking more and more dead as the hours passed.

That was probably the most terrifying part of it all, having to watch as that light in Wilbur's eyes slowly flickered out.

But finally, they reached the edge. The horses didn't wait for them, yanking their reins out of their hands so they could run ahead through the field. Wilbur and Techno made it a solid ten steps out before collapsing to their knees.

Wilbur gave an almost manic giggle, quickly falling into desperately relieved cackles as he covered his face. Techno couldn't help but join him, and together the two laughed at the setting sun. They hugged Charlotte close as thanks tumbled from their lips. She just sneezed.

They didn't set up camp that night, too tired to do much else besides crawl closer to each other. By the time they woke up, the sun was already high in the sky.

Surprisingly, the horses had stayed, although they were much smarter in deciding to sleep in the shade rather than under the boiling sun. They took off towards the hills, keeping a sharp eye out for any dead plants.

Eventually, they stumbled upon a small lake. They put Charlotte on her leash and did a long walk around its perimeter, checking for any signs of radiation. After getting the all clear, they set up their camp.

"Not a bad spot to build a house, you know," Wilbur offhandedly said. The light in his eyes blazed on, and Techno couldn't help but feel so painfully fond.

*Maybe I was looking for something,* Wilbur had said later that night. *It isn't the same as what I had, but that's okay.*

*Really?*

*Mhm.*

*…Well, I think I found what I was looking for, too.*

*Yeah?*


*Yeah.*

## End Notes

yooo fic fight fic fight fic fight

this is not beta read and i wrote it in like one day so please dont mind any mistakes aaaaa

also i graduated college!!! i am now a full time business woman so i dont really have time to write a lot 3 but i promise i still am!!

my twitter is @mackself_ so go say hi there!!!!

kudos and comments are very much appreciated

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